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GROWING UP IN FRENCH IN WESTERN CANADA: A REVIEW OF FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages

The Honourable Denis Paradis, Chair

**MAY 2018
42nd PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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**Hon. Denis Paradis
Chair**

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NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committee presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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has the honour to present its

TENTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(3)(f), the Committee has studied access to early childhood services in the minority language and has agreed to report the following:



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LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations, committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

Recommendation 1

That the Treasury Board Secretariat create a new policy instrument to require that all bilateral agreements, no matter the subject matter, include the following:

- a) initiatives and programs specific to official language minority communities (OLMCs) that deliver services equal in quality to those received by the majority;
- b) binding provisions that require the provinces and territories to hold official consultations with OLMCs;
- c) targets and performance measures tailored to OLMCs; and
- d) explicit accountability provisions that require the provinces and territories to disclose exactly how much funding is owed to OLMCs under the bilateral agreements. 37

Recommendation 2

That the Treasury Board Secretariat remind federal institutions about the *Policy on Transfer Payments* and, more specifically, paragraph 6.5.14 on an annual basis. This paragraph provides that deputy heads of federal institutions are responsible for the following:

Ensuring, when transfer payment programs support activities that benefit members of both official language communities, that their design and delivery respect the obligations of the Government of Canada as set out in Part VII of the Official Languages Act and that services and benefits are made available in both official languages in compliance with the *Official Languages Act*..... 37

Recommendation 3

That the Treasury Board Secretariat require federal institutions to implement the principle of substantive equality and that it develop implementation and annual assessment tools for that principle. The Government of Canada describes substantive equality as follows:

Substantive equality is achieved when one takes into account, where necessary, the differences in characteristics and circumstances of minority communities and provides services with distinct content or using a different method of delivery to ensure that the minority receives services of the same quality as the majority. This approach is the norm in Canadian law..... 38

Recommendation 4

That, after the current Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework expires, in negotiating future agreements, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, with his provincial and territorial counterparts, take the steps necessary to make official language minority communities a mandatory investment area. 38

Recommendation 5

That Canadian Heritage clearly define the concept of "additional costs" relative to core funding in the next Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education. 38

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada amend the *Official Languages Act* to establish and specify an increased role for the federal government in the area of minority language education, including early childhood education. 39



GROWING UP IN FRENCH IN WESTERN CANADA: A REVIEW OF FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

In its 2016 report *Toward a New Action Plan for Official Languages and Building New Momentum for Immigration in Francophone Minority Communities*, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages (the Committee) examined early childhood as part of the minority language education continuum.

The Committee noted that early childhood education (ECE) is closely connected to the vitality of official language minority communities (OLMCs). This is the stage at which children start to develop a sense of identity and a feeling of belonging to a community.

The Committee recommended that the Department of Canadian Heritage reach a strategic agreement with the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones covering early childhood education. Further to the Budget 2016 commitments on early childhood initiatives, the Committee also recommended that a portion of the allocated funding be earmarked for developing early childhood education.

In February 2018, the Committee continued its study on expanding early childhood education in French. It traveled to Vancouver, British Columbia, Edmonton, Alberta, and Winnipeg, Manitoba, to meet with community representatives, stakeholders and parents. Although the Committee did not get to Saskatchewan, it did hear from francophones living in that province.

One point stood out in the testimony: francophone communities are calling for greater provincial and federal support so that francophone children (those with French as their mother tongue or first official language spoken) aged 0 to 5 can develop a sense of language security and attachment to their community.

1. Overview of requirements for early childhood education in French in Western Canada

In each of the Western provinces, the demand for child care in French continues to significantly outstrip the availability of services. Federal and provincial funding does not



meet the needs of families, stakeholders and the post-secondary institutions that support early childhood education through training and other initiatives.

1.1. The number of child-care spaces

All of the witnesses stated that the expansion of early childhood education in French is hampered by the significant shortage of child-care spaces.

According to Marie-Pierre Lavoie, President of the *Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique*, “British Columbia would need at least 2,600 additional day care spaces – in other words, 650 multiplied by four – if we assume that children spend the first year of their lives at home with a parent.”¹ In Alberta, in 2016, there was a shortage of 660 child-care spaces to meet the needs of Franco-Albertan families.²

Waiting lists are very long as a result of the severe shortage of spaces in French child-care centres. In Manitoba, “about 800 children are on waiting lists for a place in French-language educational child care.”³ In Saskatchewan, 258 children aged 0 to 4 were on a waiting list for child care in 2015–2016.⁴ In their brief, the *Conseil des écoles fransaskoises* and its partners noted that 49.5% of francophone children in Saskatchewan whose parents want child care in French do not have access to a child-care centre.⁵

A number of families in Western Canada have no choice but to give up on French-language child care. Peter Ormiston, Vice-President of the *Association des parents Fransaskois (APF)*, explained that the inability to meet the needs of francophone communities “is equivalent to a loss of clientele, not only for ECCs [early childhood

1 House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages [LANG], *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0850 (Marie-Pierre Lavoie, President, *Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique*).

2 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 1 March 2018, 0935 (Gillian Anderson, President, *Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta*).

3 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0915 (Brigitte L'Heureux, Managing Director, *Fédération des parents du Manitoba*).

4 *Conseil des écoles fransaskoises et al.*, *Accès aux services à la petite enfance dans la langue de la minorité*, submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages as part of the study on access to early childhood services in French, Winnipeg, 2 March 2018, p. 11. [Available in French only]

5 Ibid.

centres], but also for our schools in Saskatchewan. Finally, it is the community as a whole that loses vitality.”⁶

1.2. Physical space

Jocelyne Ky, Director of the Tartine et Chocolat daycare centre in Vancouver, told the Committee that “early childhood services in British Columbia, especially Vancouver, face a dire shortage of suitable, stable spaces to meet their clients' needs.”⁷ Moreover, “preschool centres located in the board's schools are limited by the space available in the school.”⁸

The lack of child-care spaces and proper facilities is closely linked to the lack of physical space in French-language schools. Most child-care centres offering French-language services are housed in schools. Despite the best efforts of French school boards, their infrastructure issues hinder the expansion of early childhood services in French.

For example, Tartine et Chocolat is located in an old portable at Anne Hébert School. This is not unusual, according to Marie-France Lapierre, President of the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique: “The vast majority of our preschool centres are in old portable structures behind the schools.”⁹ In the case of Tartine et Chocolat, the school board provides the portable, and the child-care centre pays for its upkeep.¹⁰

In January 2017, however, Tartine et Chocolat and two other preschools learned that they would have to find new facilities if British Columbia's francophone school board could not find a way to accommodate its growing student population. This announcement had a significant impact: “Despite a short-term solution, we have been operating since then under the certain knowledge that our day care will have to find other accommodations or close its doors.”¹¹

6 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0855 (Peter Ormiston, Vice-Président, Association des parents fransaskois).

7 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0900 (Jocelyne Ky, Director, Tartine et Chocolat Daycare and Preschool).

8 Ibid.

9 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0925 (Marie-France Lapierre, President, Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique).

10 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0900 (Jocelyne Ky, Director, Tartine et Chocolat Daycare and Preschool).

11 Ibid.



This case is not unique. Nathalie Lachance, President of Alberta's Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord, stated that the "increase in enrolment in many of our schools adds a level of fragility to the use of spaces for early childhood education."¹²

We face challenges related to the spaces needed for our pupils' schooling, and this leads to the troubling solution of having to ask daycare services to leave our schools—and this breaks our hearts. You can understand what repercussions this will have later on.

We measure the scope of the challenge related to the spaces and access to early childhood services every year, and preschoolers are only a segment of the children who are signed up for kindergarten in our schools. If we had more spaces reserved for early childhood programs, we could prepare our French-language schools to welcome larger cohorts of children.¹³

Maryse Beaujeau-Weppenaar, Executive Director of the Réseau-Femmes Colombie-Britannique, explained that in order to expand early childhood services in French, there was a need to relieve "the pressure on existing schools by building more infrastructure and encouraging the development of the francophone community through a significant boost in financial and human resources."¹⁴ Capital projects, especially new schools, must therefore take early childhood requirements into account.¹⁵

The Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages recently studied the school infrastructure issues facing francophone communities, specifically those in British Columbia. Among the recommendations in its report *Horizon 2018: Toward Stronger Support of French-Language Learning in British Columbia*,¹⁶ **the Senate committee stated that federal institutions should "take into account the interests and needs of official language minority schools in the sale or transfer of real and personal property."**¹⁷ [Our emphasis]

The federal government replied that "the sale and transfer of former federal lands for the purpose of building minority language schools is complex, and decisions regarding

12 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 1 March 2018, 0920 (Nathalie Lachance, President, Conseil Scolaire Centre-Nord).

13 Ibid.

14 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0900 (Maryse Beaujeau-Weppenaar, Executive Director, Réseau-Femmes Colombie-Britannique).

15 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0925 (Marie-Andrée Asselin, Managing Director, Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique).

16 Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, *Horizon 2018: Toward Stronger Support of French-Language Learning in British Columbia*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, May 2017.

17 Ibid., p. 52.

the planning, allocation and approval for land uses on these properties involve multiple players.”¹⁸ In addition, the “issue in Vancouver has provided the Government with an occasion to remind all federal institutions that they are required to comply with the Treasury Board Secretariat’s *Directive on the Sale or Transfer of Surplus Real Property*.”¹⁹

The Directive identifies official languages minority communities as a stakeholder whose needs must be considered in both routine and strategic disposals of federal lands.²⁰

This directive has been in effect since 1 November 2006.

The infrastructure problem is compounded by the fact that there is not a detailed portrait of rights holders. This shortcoming is a real hindrance to developing a French-language education continuum in Canada. The census is the only source for this information and, without it, French school boards cannot plan their services properly, especially early childhood services. Marie-France Lapierre explained the impact of not having a complete picture of rights holders:

[A]t a meeting of our board of directors last week, we learned that we had received four requests asking for new schools to be opened in the province. Clearly we cannot open four schools at the same time. If the census provided more data, we could determine where the needs are greatest. So that is really important for us.²¹

In the spring of 2017, the Committee tabled a report in the House of Commons entitled *The Enumeration of Rights-Holders Under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms: Toward a Census that Supports the Charter*. The Committee also agreed to continue its work on this issue of key importance to OLMCs.

1.3. Human resources

Throughout Western Canada, the shortage of qualified staff, particularly early childhood educators, is making it difficult to provide child care in French.

Marie-Pierre Lavoie, President of the Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique, told the Committee that although this shortage is felt province-wide, it is exacerbated by the challenges of living in a francophone minority community:

18 Government of Canada, Response to the report by Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages entitled *Horizon 2018: Toward Stronger Support of French-Language Learning in British Columbia*, p. 6.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0935 (Marie-France Lapierre, Chair, Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique).



Turning now to human resources, I would note that our communities are harder hit by the province-wide shortage of early childhood educators, given that our community vitality depends on access to French-language early childhood services.²²

Mélanie Cwikla, Director of Technical and Professional Programs at the Université de Saint-Boniface, cited statistics illustrating the urgent need to help Manitoba's francophone daycare care centres:

I do not say that lightly; 11 of 21 licensed francophone day care centres had to ask the province for an exemption because they did not have enough trained staff.²³

In Alberta, the Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta (FPFA) found a short-term solution to human resource problems. The FPFA introduced "a bank of replacements available to beneficiaries of FPFA services." This bank "ensures continuity in the provision of services, both on big sites and smaller ones."²⁴

1.4. Specialized services

A group of six French-language community agencies in Saskatchewan submitted a joint brief describing the issues facing francophone families with special needs children:

One of the biggest gaps involves French-language services for special needs children. This is true for early childhood education centres as well. Aside from larger cities with a concentration of francophones, such as Ottawa, Sudbury or Moncton, and in Quebec, these services are practically unavailable across Canada. Whether for mental health issues or behavioural and learning difficulties, specialists must be dispatched from cities in Ontario and Quebec, which is costly for French school boards. Quite often, the tools needed to identify problems do not exist in French, and it is difficult to validate the results and propose treatment. The way to address these gaps is expensive and, as stated previously, requires technological solutions such as a strong virtual network to connect specialists and local resources. In addition, students who have not had access to programs and services in French display a number of learning difficulties directly related to their language skills. The larger the region in which services are spread, the more problems emerge.²⁵ [Translation]

22 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0850 (Marie-Pierre Lavoie, President, Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique).

23 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0850 (Mélanie Cwikla, Director, Technical and Professional Programs, Université de Saint-Boniface, As an Individual).

24 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 1 March 2018, 0935 (Gillian Anderson, President, Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta).

25 Conseil des écoles fransaskoises et al., *Accès aux services à la petite enfance dans la langue de la minorité*, submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages as part of the study on access to early childhood services in French, Winnipeg, 2 March 2018, p. 12. [Available in French only]

Jocelyne Ky, Director of the Tartine et Chocolat daycare centre in Vancouver, added that in some cases even “the building has not been modified to meet the child's mobility needs.”²⁶

The inability to provide specialized services in French means that the French education system inevitably loses students. Some francophone families must seek services in the majority language: “We do not have enough qualified French-speaking support staff, and specialized organizations provide service in English only. I have seen a number of families, discouraged by the lack of available services, switch to the English-language education system as a result.”²⁷

Juliette Chabot, Director of the Chouettes de Lorette child-care centre, located in the village of Lorette 26 kilometers southeast of Winnipeg, explained the situation in Manitoba:

When we have to provide special services to a child, these services are not always in French. In fact, instead of putting the child on a waiting list and delaying our assistance, most of the time we use English-speaking specialists to provide such services.²⁸

Things are not much different in Alberta: “It is extremely difficult for francophone families to access specialized services in their language. Some ... pay a fortune for private speech therapy services [...]”²⁹ [Translation]

In its brief, Alberta's Institut Guy-Lacombe de la famille shared the story of one francophone child who was being assessed for attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity. The neuropsychiatrist refused to make a diagnosis because the school reports were written in French only and no translation services were available. The specialists shirked their responsibility, and the child was unable to receive treatment.³⁰

The inability to help francophone children and families who need specialized services is due, in part, to the lack of support for early childhood education programs at French

26 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0900 (Jocelyne Ky, Director, Tartine et Chocolat Daycare and Preschool).

27 Ibid.

28 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0920 (Juliette Chabot, Director, Les Chouettes de Lorette Inc.).

29 Institut Guy-Lacombe de la famille, *Comparution devant le Comité permanent des langues officielles*, 1 March 2018, p. 3. [Available in French only]

30 Ibid.



colleges and universities. Mélanie Cwikla, Director of Technical and Professional Programs at the Université de Saint-Boniface, explained the problem as follows:

In addition, anglophone colleges are able to offer advanced training programs that focus on children with special needs. At the Université de Saint-Boniface and École technique et professionnelle, we are barely able to keep our core programs going. Francophone children have the same needs as their anglophone counterparts, and our day care centres are desperate for qualified staff.³¹

This view is shared by francophones in Saskatchewan: "Colleges and universities could be the ideal partners as they would receive funding to help francophone early childhood educators develop professional skills."³² [Translation]

1.5. Challenges facing French post-secondary institutions

A small number of French-language post-secondary institutions in Western Canada offer training in French for early childhood educators. In Manitoba, the Technical and Professional Programs division of the Université de Saint-Boniface has a two-year course in French leading to ECE accreditation.³³ In Saskatchewan, Collège Mathieu has an ECE program leading to a college diploma or certificate.³⁴

In British Columbia, Educacentre College offers certification and professional development workshops for early childhood educators. Although the centre is accredited as a private college and has received the Education Quality Assurance designation from B.C.'s Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills & Training, its early childhood programs are offered in cooperation with an English-language college. As a result, it does not have sole control over its programs, which restricts its ability to meet francophones' needs. According to officials from the college, it would need only \$200,000 in funding to develop its own program and obtain provincial recognition. But this is impossible without financial support.

31 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0850 (Mélanie Cwikla, Director, Technical and Professional Programs, Université de Saint-Boniface, As an Individual).

32 Conseil des écoles fransaskoises et al., *Accès aux services à la petite enfance dans la langue de la minorité*, submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages as part of the study on access to early childhood services in French, Winnipeg, 2 March 2018, p. 18. [Available in French only]

33 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0845 (Dominique Arbez, Professor and Coordinator, Early Childhood Education, Université de Saint-Boniface, As an Individual).

34 Conseil des écoles fransaskoises et al., *Accès aux services à la petite enfance dans la langue de la minorité*, submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages as part of the study on access to early childhood services in French, Winnipeg, 2 March 2018, p. 15. [Available in French only]

The Centre collégial de l'Alberta trains staff and helps child-care centres "obtain the accreditation and recognition they need."³⁵ In order to meet community needs, post-secondary institutions occasionally launch initiatives before the funding is in place, according to Dolorèse Nolette, Assistant Dean and Director of the Centre collégial:

[W]e are in the process of establishing a program for which the Alberta government tells us it has no new funds at the moment. Consequently, we are going to use the funds we will be given under the Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages to get the program up and running as we wait for better economic times in Alberta. We will then be able to apply for provincial government funding.³⁶

Ms. Nolette believes that the province needs to take responsibility for early childhood education in French:

I believe that the Government of Alberta has a role to play. It must not simply rely on the official language communities establishing early childhood services.³⁷

Provincial underfunding is clearly a problem for all French post-secondary institutions.

Training qualified early childhood educators is just as important as opening child-care spaces, considering that the provinces and territories require educators to hold licences and diplomas from recognized post-secondary institutions, and meet a number of other criteria.

Training is doubly important for francophone communities. As Mélanie Cwikla, Director of Technical and Professional Programs at the Université de Saint-Boniface, explained, "Our French-language programs have a dual mandate: train experts in early childhood development as well as experts in language transmission.... [N]o anglophone institution has such a mandate."³⁸ However, some provinces, such as Manitoba, do not seem to consider the unique situation of French post-secondary institutions when evaluating programs:

[O]ur training programs are often assessed based on the same performance criteria, in other words, the number of students we serve and the cost per student. Little to no

35 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 1 March 2018, 0905 (Dolorès Nolette, Assistant Dean and Director, Centre collégial de l'Alberta, Campus Saint-Jean, As an Individual).

36 Ibid., 0910.

37 Ibid.

38 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0850 (Mélanie Cwikla, Director, Technical and Professional Programs, Université de Saint-Boniface, As an Individual).



recognition is given to our dual mandate or the fact that our recruitment pool is significantly smaller than that of our anglophone counterparts.³⁹

According to Ms. Cwikla, "In order to support access to early childhood services in minority language communities, the federal government should ensure that a portion of the funds transferred to the provinces goes to post-secondary training in French. This would help francophone institutions provide comparable training to that of their anglophone counterparts."⁴⁰

1.5.1. Integrating educational daycare centres in post-secondary institutions

In some provinces, majority-language post-secondary institutions have "educational daycare centres that can benefit from collaborative agreements. These agreements give students in early childhood exceptional internship or shadowing opportunities."⁴¹ No such centre exists at Educacentre College in British Columbia or the Université de Saint-Boniface in Manitoba.

A few years ago, the Université de Saint-Boniface suggested establishing a centre of excellence for children, families and the community. The centre would consist of a 100-space child-care facility to recruit and train ECE students. The proposal was abandoned when the Government of Manitoba rejected the licence and funding application. The university recently reintroduced the proposal and applied for funding from two levels of government. Ms. Dominique Arbez, Professor and Coordinator of the Early Childhood Education program at the Université de Saint-Boniface, recommended that the federal and provincial governments approve "funding dedicated to implementing a high-quality educational daycare centre on campus, which could serve as an educational model."⁴²

1.5.2. Raising the occupational status

According to Jocelyne Ky, Director of the Tartine et Chocolat daycare centre in Vancouver, part of the reason for the shortage of qualified staff and the difficulty recruiting students is that early childhood educators have a low occupational status. Educators' wages and working conditions underline this unfortunate situation.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0845 (Dominique Arbez, Professor and Coordinator, Early Childhood Education, Université de Saint-Boniface, As an Individual).

42 Ibid.

Their average wage is low. In British Columbia, “a qualified educator earns \$17 an hour, on the average. A director earns \$22 an hour, median wage.”⁴³ The minimum wage in British Columbia was \$11.35 an hour as of 1 September 2017 (it will rise to \$12.65 on 1 June 2018).

The situation is not much different in Manitoba:

Red River College conducted a survey of its 2015-16 graduates. It revealed that they earned an average of \$34,732 a year. After \$8,000 in tuition fees and two years of study, graduates earn the same thing as someone who completed a five-month certificate program to become a personal care attendant for just \$2,400.⁴⁴

Ms. Cwikla told the Committee that “tuition is \$8,000 and the students have to invest two years of their life to earn close to minimum wage once they get their degree, perhaps a bit more if they are lucky.”⁴⁵

Ms. Ky summed up the working conditions in this way: “Staff have few or no benefits, no group health insurance plan, and no pension plan, and as a result, the occupation receives little recognition and the early childhood field is not very attractive.”⁴⁶

Ms. Cwikla believes that being an early childhood educator “is something of a calling.”⁴⁷

Working conditions appear to be even more difficult in minority communities: “Like their anglophone counterparts, francophone educators have to ensure children are well prepared to start school, but French-language school. They, too, have a dual mandate to fulfill: early childhood development and language transmission. Some of them eventually throw in the towel and leave the field.”⁴⁸ Ms. Ky noted the same trend in British Columbia, remarking that “not only do we have trouble recruiting new educators,

43 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0940 (Jocelyne Ky, Director, Tartine et Chocolat Daycare and Preschool).

44 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0850 (Mélanie Cwikla, Director, Technical and Professional Programs, Université de Saint-Boniface, As an Individual).

45 Ibid., 0935.

46 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0900 (Jocelyne Ky, Director, Tartine et Chocolat Daycare and Preschool).

47 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0850 (Mélanie Cwikla, Director, Technical and Professional Programs, Université de Saint-Boniface, As an Individual).

48 Ibid.



but many of them leave the profession. They work between three and five years in the profession, and then they leave because it's not worth it."⁴⁹

Dominique Arbez, Professor and Coordinator of the Early Childhood Education program at Manitoba's Université de Saint-Boniface, recommended "implementing measures to re-enforce the recognition and the value of minority early childhood professionals, in order to help recruit and retain them," as well as "more support for networking and sharing opportunities among the various professionals, in order to give them the right tools and encourage their dedication."⁵⁰

On the subject of recruitment, Dominique Arbez pointed out that students in the program are from a range of backgrounds. Although the professors recognize and integrate the students' cultural and linguistic origins, this "diversity brings some challenges in the mastery of both official languages."⁵¹ The "required practical internships in French- and English-speaking environments have led to new criteria for language courses. These restrictions, although necessary, have contributed to a drop in enrolment."⁵² To address this issue, Ms. Arbez recommended allocating "funds to provide additional preparatory courses for potential students in post-secondary education in both official languages"⁵³ and "funds to recruit potential students, as well as to develop and offer online courses to ensure access to training."⁵⁴

1.5.3. Recruiting students from out of province

A number of administrative barriers make it difficult to recruit students and relieve the shortage of early childhood educators. According to Jocelyne Ky, Director of the Tartine et Chocolat daycare centre, French post-secondary institutions have difficulty obtaining degree equivalency between provinces, particularly Quebec and British Columbia.⁵⁵ Isabelle Thibault also told the Committee that qualifications "are not automatically recognized." Often, the qualifications of teachers from other provinces or from abroad

49 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0940 (Jocelyne Ky, Director, Tartine et Chocolat Daycare and Preschool).

50 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0845 (Dominique Arbez, Professor and Coordinator, Early Childhood Education, Université de Saint-Boniface, As an Individual).

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0900 (Jocelyne Ky, Director, Tartine et Chocolat Daycare and Preschool).

"are not recognized 100% and they have to go back to school. It is very discouraging for them."⁵⁶ This situation emphasizes the need for post-secondary institutions to "offer a provincially recognized program in French."⁵⁷

1.5.4. Research

French post-secondary institutions are interested in contributing to research on early childhood education, but they have few or no resources. As Ms. Cwikla told the Committee, "Special funding should be made available to support research by francophone institutions in minority communities. This would pave the way for universities and colleges to work with francophone communities to conduct research, documenting the positive impact of early childhood investments on the vitality of francophone minority communities."⁵⁸

1.6. Support for families

Choosing to educate their child in French beginning in preschool is not a decision that parents in minority-language communities take lightly. They have to be fully committed to their decision and ready to overcome a number of challenges. CÉF President Alpha Barry described his experience:

I am a parent first and then the chair of the school board. I have three young children. We live in the north end of the city in a new subdivision. We have to cross the whole city to reach the only francophone school, which is in the south end, and that is also where the only francophone daycare is. I can tell you it is a sacrifice. Our travelling time is over an hour. By the time we get the children home, we hardly have any time to do all kinds of other things for them. The school is the means, the avenue for preserving our language and culture.⁵⁹

Most families in Western Canada whose children attend a French daycare centre or school face the same situation as Mr. Barry.

In British Columbia, the Fédération des parents francophones, the Réseau-Femmes Colombie-Britannique and RésoSanté established the Centre d'appui à la famille et à

56 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0950 (Isabelle Thibault, Director of Studies, Educacentre College).

57 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0845 (Dominique Arbez, Professor and Coordinator, Early Childhood Education, Université de Saint-Boniface, As an Individual).

58 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0850 (Mélanie Cwikla, Director, Technical and Professional Programs, Université de Saint-Boniface, As an Individual).

59 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0930 (Alpha Barry, President, Conseil des écoles fransaskoises).



l'enfance (CAFE). This family and child resource centre is part of the provincial network of Early Years Centres, a key component of the provincial early childhood strategy. Maryse Beaujeau-Weppenaar, Executive Director of the Réseau-Femmes Colombie-Britannique, gave an overview of CAFE's activities:

CAFE is the go-to gateway for information, resources, and activities specifically designed for Vancouver's francophone families with children up to the age of six. The CAFE initiative is intended to support parents and their young children by embracing diversity, and delivering a range of programs and services in the areas of health, education, and early childhood development. It provides parents with resources to equip them for their role as their child's first educators, giving them information on available early childhood development services, including preschool centres, and promoting activities and opportunities for them to have fun with their children in French while meeting other parents.⁶⁰

CAFE encourages francophone communities to "work together to ensure families have access to the services essential to their young children's health, well-being, and development."⁶¹

These centres are also found in Saskatchewan. Those in Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert are located in or near French-language schools and are administered by the Association des parents fransaskois. Working with Collège Mathieu, the APF has also set up a playgroup initiative. All 10 playgroups are located in rural areas and enable parents to play and relax with their children aged 0 to 5 through French-language activities.⁶²

Franco-Manitobans have established Early Childhood and Family Centres (ECFCs). There are currently 16 ECFCs in Manitoba, 11 of them in rural areas.⁶³

In Alberta, francophone families use the French-language services of a parent support centre.

The popularity of these programs proves that families need support. However, the programs are victims of their own success. In British Columbia, the "CAFE initiative is

60 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0900 (Maryse Beaujeau-Weppenaar, Executive Director, Réseau-Femmes Colombie-Britannique).

61 Ibid.

62 Conseil des écoles fransaskoises et al., *Accès aux services à la petite enfance dans la langue de la minorité*, submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages as part of the study on access to early childhood services in French, Winnipeg, 2 March 2018, p. 4. [Available in French only]

63 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0900 (Joanne Colliou, Manager, Centre de la petite enfance et de la famille, Coalition francophone de la petite enfance du Manitoba).

available only in the greater Vancouver area. There is, however, an overwhelming need for the program across the Réseau-Femmes Colombie-Britannique communities.”⁶⁴

The same need is present in Manitoba. As Joanne Colliou of the Coalition francophone de la petite enfance du Manitoba explained, only 11 of the 16 ECFCs receive funding, and five school communities “are still waiting for an ECFC. There is a lack of funds, and families are clamouring for an ECFC in their community. The remaining five communities are also the communities that are a little further away from the urban area and have more needs than many others.”⁶⁵

1.6.1. Support for exogamous families

It is interesting to note that the main clients of British Columbia’s CAFE program are exogamous families from very culturally diverse backgrounds. Ms. Ky explained that many exogamous families seek support because “the French-speaking parent faces the challenge of bringing French into the family and supporting its acquisition.”⁶⁶ Community support assists the francophone parent in this task and helps that person feel less isolated.

The same is true for Manitoba. However, there are only a small number of programs specifically for exogamous families. The Coalition francophone de la petite enfance du Manitoba hopes to do more in this regard.⁶⁷

2. Federal support for early childhood education in French

The first part of the report provided a list of the ECE needs and priorities of francophone communities in Western Canada. Provincial funding clearly does not meet the communities’ basic requirements. There is a long way to go before their services are of equal quality to those of majority-language speakers!

The second part of the report examines the main instruments the Government of Canada uses to support early childhood education in French: the *Multilateral Early*

64 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0900 (Maryse Beaujeau-Weppenaar, Executive Director, Réseau-Femmes Colombie-Britannique).

65 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0900 (Joanne Colliou, Manager, Centre de la petite enfance et de la famille, Coalition francophone de la petite enfance du Manitoba).

66 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0900 (Jocelyne Ky, Director, Tartine et Chocolat Daycare and Preschool).

67 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0900 (Joanne Colliou, Manager, Centre de la petite enfance et de la famille, Coalition francophone de la petite enfance du Manitoba).



Learning and Child Care Framework (the Multilateral Framework); and the *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction* (the Protocol).

2.1. Analysis of the *Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework*

In June 2017, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development announced the approval of the *Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework*. The Government of Canada agreed to invest a total of \$1.2 billion over the next three years through this framework. Federal funding will be allocated through bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories.

The federal government has so far signed bilateral agreements with every province except Quebec.⁶⁸

In response to the announcement of the new Multilateral Framework, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA) called for the framework to include concrete and targeted measures in support of early childhood services in French, and reminded the federal government of the need for the agreements to include strong language clauses.⁶⁹

Despite the FCFA's call to action, the Multilateral Framework does not seem to treat the needs of francophone communities as a priority. As an official from the CSFCB told the Committee, "There are only two references to obligations relating to language, and these are far from being prescriptive."⁷⁰

The following is an excerpt from the section of the framework entitled "A set of principles":

Early learning and child care systems are respectful of language and culture and in particular **recognize the unique needs of French and English linguistic minority**

68 The agreements were signed on the following dates: Ontario (16 June 2017), Prince Edward Island (29 August 2017), New Brunswick (30 August 2017), Nunavut (20 September 2017), Manitoba (14 December 2017), Alberta (15 December 2017), Newfoundland and Labrador (15 December 2017), Nova Scotia (10 January 2018), Yukon (7 February 2018), Northwest Territories (14 February 2018), British Columbia (23 February 2018) and Saskatchewan (5 March 2018).

69 Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA), *Entente multilatérale sur l'apprentissage et la garde des jeunes enfants : il faut des mesures concrètes et ciblées pour la petite enfance en français, dit la FCFA*, News release, 13 June 2017. [Available in French only]

70 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0835 (Marc-André Ouellette, Vice-Chair, Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique).

communities and those identified by provinces and territories in their action plans, and of Indigenous peoples. [Our emphasis]

Under "Public reporting," the Multilateral Framework states that the government "will report annually on progress made in relation to the Framework and the impact of federal funding, while reflecting the priorities of each jurisdiction in early learning and child care." Provinces and territories are to choose from a list of indicators that reflect their areas of investment. (Additional indicators may be agreed to as well.)

The indicators are divided into three categories: high quality, accessible and inclusive. The following indicator appears in the "inclusive category": "Number of children benefiting from programs and/or a number of programs designed to serve children from diverse populations, **which could include but not limited to: children from French and English linguistic minority communities**, Indigenous people off-reserve, recent immigrants and refugees." [Our emphasis]

2.1.1. Analysis of early learning and child care bilateral agreements

For the purposes of this report, the Committee analyzed the support for francophone communities in the Canada–British Columbia and Canada–Manitoba agreements.

In section 2.2.2 of "Eligible Areas of Investment," the Canada–British Columbia agreement states that in "developing and delivering its early learning and child care programs and services, British Columbia agrees to take into account the needs of French-speaking communities." This provision also appears in section 2.2.6 of the Canada–Manitoba agreement.

Section 2.2.5 of the Canada–British Columbia agreement provides a list of the most urgent needs, such as "having **limited or no access to early learning and child care programs and services in the children's official language**." This provision is also found in section 2.2.4 of the Canada–Manitoba agreement. It should be noted that section 2.2.5 of the Canada–Manitoba agreement clearly includes "Official Languages Minority Communities" as an eligible area of investment.

Section 5, "Accountability and reporting," deals with the provincial action plan. The agreement stipulates that the province is to publicly release its action plan, which "[i]dentifies specific priority areas for investment and objectives, within the Framework's parameters, based on an assessment of progress to date in the quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility and/or inclusivity of their early learning and child care system, with consideration for those more in need." Families that are considered "more in need" are listed in section 2.2.5 of the Canada–British Columbia agreement and section 2.2.4



of the Canada–Manitoba agreement. These lists include persons who have limited access to early learning and child-care programs and services in the children’s official language.

In its action plan, a signatory province must state how it plans “to address the early learning and child care needs of its children/families more in need.” This is a reference to sections 2.2.5 (Canada–British Columbia) and 2.2.4 (Canada–Manitoba).

To demonstrate accountability, signatory provinces must prepare an annual report for public release. British Columbia’s report is to include such information as “the impact on families more in need as described in section 2.2.5” (paragraph 5.2.2(a)(iii)). The Canada–Manitoba agreement contains a similar provision stating that the annual report is to include the “[i]mpact on families more in need, including families that have limited access to programs and **services in their official language**” (paragraph 5.2.2(c)(iii)). [Our emphasis]

Lastly, the annual report must contain a description of any “consultation processes.” There is a small but interesting difference between the British Columbia agreement and the Manitoba agreement. The British Columbia agreement refers to a “[d]escription of any relevant consultation processes, the type of groups consulted and the relation to the priorities referred to in Annex 2,” whereas the Manitoba agreement provides for the “[d]escription of any consultation processes undertaken and the stakeholder groups consulted.”

In the final analysis, francophone communities are not a mandatory area of investment. To some, the inclusion of the phrase “agrees to take into account the needs of French-speaking communities” constitutes an important source of leverage for OLMCs in their efforts to secure better French-language services. That said, the scope of this commitment to “take into account” their needs remains limited; it does not necessarily lead to positive measures for OLMCs. In other words, the provinces must make an effort, but do not necessarily have to produce results.

2.1.2. Analysis of provincial and territorial action plans on early learning and child care

The provincial action plans need to be reviewed to determine whether francophone communities are among the areas of investment. These action plans are included in annex 2 of the bilateral agreements.

2.1.2.1. Manitoba's action plan

The Canada–Manitoba agreement represents an investment of \$46,840,340 over three years.

With regard to early childhood education in French, Manitoba states that its action plan “is also considerate of diversity and respectful of the communities in our province requiring additional supports (i.e. lower income, Indigenous and newcomers, **Francophone**, and lone parent families, as well as, families with children with additional needs, and families in underserved communities, such as Rural and Northern areas of the province).” [Our emphasis]

Under pillar 1, “Supporting new and newly funded, affordable and accessible spaces,” Manitoba stipulates that “the up to 650 newly funded spaces ... [are] expected to include up to 94 newly funded spaces supporting the French language community in Manitoba.” This means that close to 14% of the new child-care spaces will be allocated to francophones. The 2016 Census found that the francophone minority made up 3.2% of Manitoba's population.

Furthermore, in its action plan the province states that “currently 23% of Francophone children in Manitoba have access to child care services in French, with 579 full-time child care centre spaces in 2016/17 for Francophone children aged 0-4, as per the 2016 Census from Statistics Canada.”

Pillar 3, “Rural and Northern Strategy,” includes an initiative to pilot a competency-based assessment program for rural and Northern communities. According to the action plan, the original competency-based assessment program will be redesigned to include “new eligibility criteria and curriculum guidelines.” This will “enable specialized focus on targeted communities such as Indigenous and **French language**. [Our emphasis]” The initiative “aims to increase the number of qualified, certified and trained staff who will support more high-quality programming in these underserved regions.” Although the plan addresses francophones, it does not set any specific targets (for example, the number of francophone employees).

Under pillar 5, “Community Engagement and Public Reporting,” Manitoba promises to set up a minister's advisory committee “with members representing, but not limited to: parents, child care centre directors, family child care home providers, early childhood educators, sector advocacy organizations, Indigenous peoples, **French language child care sector**, and post-secondary institutions offering ECE diploma programs.” [Our emphasis]



2.1.2.1.1. Witnesses' concerns regarding the Manitoba action plan

The Division scolaire franco-manitobaine was critical of the Canada–Manitoba agreement and the provincial action plan. An official from the organization stated bluntly that the bilateral agreement “does not meet the needs of the Franco-Manitoban community.”⁷¹ There is also a concern that the language clauses “do not impose sufficient obligations on Manitoba” with regard to francophone communities.⁷²

2.1.2.2. British Columbia's action plan

The Canada–British Columbia action plan represents an investment of \$153,024,237 over three years.

British Columbia's action plan contains a number of provisions on support for early childhood education in French. For example, the action plan states that the “Ministry of Children and Family Development has and will continue to work in partnership with the BC Francophone Affairs Program to review early learning and child care options available to French-speaking families and children.”

In addition, British Columbia is “targeting funding into program areas that **could be of benefit** to French-language communities.” [Our emphasis] It notes that stakeholders “could apply for new Capital Grants and expanded funding for ECE training.” The province also agrees to “report on access by Francophones to relevant priority initiatives.”

In terms of recruiting and training early childhood educators, the province states that students in the Educacentre College's program “are eligible for ECE Bursaries,” which is a general bursary program. More specifically, the province “will take steps to ensure that the number of francophone educators within the ECE Bursary Program is broadly consistent with the proportion of francophone family/children in the province (1.5%).” The bursary program stipulated in the action plan – the Early Childhood Educator Training Fund – is intended to train 4,000 early childhood educators over three years. Based on their percentage of the population, francophone communities can expect to receive 60 early childhood educators able to work in French.

71 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0910 (Alain Laberge, Director General, Division scolaire franco-manitobaine).

72 Ibid.

The province also intends to “establish baseline data on the number of francophone educators who receive funding from the ECE Bursary Program in 2018” and will start reporting on results in 2019.

British Columbia has committed to translate the Early Learning Framework, or *Cadre d'apprentissage de jeunes enfants en français*, as it “provides a foundation for early learning programs.”

As new child-care spaces are created, the province will work with specific public-sector agencies and institutions “to take into account the diverse and special needs of communities, such as French speaking communities, to help address their specific child care and early learning needs.” However, the province did not specify if any of these are French-language agencies and institutions.

Lastly, British Columbia has agreed that an “information session will be held for the Francophone School District to ensure their input is received and that the district is aware of the opportunities under the space creation initiative.”

2.1.2.2.1. Witnesses' concerns regarding the British Columbia action plan

Marc-André Ouellette, Vice-Chair of the *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique*, declared that “[r]egardless of its terms, the framework does not offer either support or permanent protection for French-language education in early childhood.”⁷³

Marie-Pierre Lavoie, President of the *Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique*, stated that consultations during the agreement development process “may not have been adequate”⁷⁴ and that “transparency is lacking.”⁷⁵ She feels that the agreements should require the provinces and territories to consult francophone communities.⁷⁶

On the issue of funding, Ms. Lavoie thinks that, overall, the “bilateral agreement focuses particular attention on the shortage of early childhood educators, and that is essential. That is one of the things we lack.”⁷⁷ However, Marc-André Ouellette, Vice-Chair of the

73 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0835 (Marc-André Ouellette, Vice-Chair, *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique*).

74 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0920 (Marie-Pierre Lavoie, President, *Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique*).

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid., 0935.



Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, believes that the agreement has little funding and few initiatives for francophones in British Columbia: "British Columbia earmarks 1.5% of its budget for bursaries for French-language early childhood educators."⁷⁸ Mr. Ouellette was critical of the shortage of resources for francophones:

We are being offered very little in this agreement. On the one hand, the 1.5% investment for the training of educators is calculated on the basis of population data, but we see on the other hand that the assimilation rate is higher. And so, the investment calculations need to take more criteria into account if we want to train more early childhood educators.⁷⁹

Ms. Lavoie was concerned that the agreement did not "mention capital assets and infrastructure" or "plan for the creation of new spaces for francophones specifically."⁸⁰

2.2. *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction*

For over 30 years, the Government of Canada has been negotiating bilateral agreements under the *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction*. It reserves the right to approve measures such as contributions to early childhood education in a minority context, in particular the provision of school child-care services and complementary preschool programs.⁸¹

The 2013–2018 Protocol expired on 31 March 2018.

Many witnesses, including francophone school boards, noted that the Protocol and the resulting bilateral agreements have two main drawbacks. First, the Protocol disregards the administrative power granted to French-language school boards in section 23 of the Charter. Second, the Protocol gives the provinces and territories a great deal of latitude and allows them to ignore their responsibilities towards OLMCs.

78 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0835 (Marc-André Ouellette, Vice-Chair, Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique).

79 Ibid., 0935.

80 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0935 (Marie-Pierre Lavoie, President Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique).

81 *Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction 2013–2014 to 2017–2018 between the Government of Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada*, p. 11.

2.2.1. A protocol by and for official language minority communities

By cutting education officials in francophone communities out of the process of negotiating and implementing the Protocol and the bilateral agreements, the Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments are ignoring the principles underlying the powers of minority school boards set out in the Supreme Court of Canada's 1990 decision in *Mahé*:⁸²

The minority language representatives should have exclusive authority to make decisions relating to the minority language instruction and facilities, including: (a) **expenditures of funds provided for such instruction and facilities;** (b) appointment and direction of those responsible for the administration of such instruction and facilities; (c) establishment of programs of instruction; (d) recruitment and assignment of teachers and other personnel; and (e) **making of agreements for education and services for minority language pupils.**⁸³ [Our emphasis]

Numerous witnesses, including the Conseil scolaire des écoles fransaskoises, argue that this failure to include school boards in the governance model established by the Protocol and the bilateral agreements has caused the many problems encountered over the years.

2.2.2. Are there limits to the provinces and territories' prerogatives?

Many witnesses pointed out that the Protocol gives the provinces and territories substantial latitude. They are particularly concerned that subparagraph 7.4.3.2 allows provincial and territorial governments to transfer funds "between linguistic objectives ... with the prior agreement of the Government of Canada." In other words, if Canadian Heritage agrees, provincial and territorial governments can divert funding intended for French-language schools to French-as-a-second-language education projects. Note that the Protocol does not require the French school board in question to agree to the transfer.

Under subparagraph 7.4.3.1, transfers of funds "between areas of intervention under the same linguistic objective may be made at the discretion of the provincial/territorial government." Provinces can therefore use funding intended for access to French-language post-secondary education to support initiatives under the "Student participation" heading, which covers recruitment, integration and retention of pupils at the primary and secondary levels.

82 *Mahé v. Alberta*, [1990] 1 SCR 342.

83 *Mahé v. Alberta*, [1990] 1 SCR 342, p. 377.



As regards consultation, the Protocol does not require governments to take positive measures. Subclause 9.3 states the following:

Each provincial/territorial government agrees to consult with interested associations and groups, **when deemed necessary**, as it develops its action plan. The federal and provincial/territorial governments may agree, in the context of their respective bilateral agreement, to hold joint consultations. In accordance with Paragraph 3.6.2, the preamble to the provincial/territorial action plan will describe the consultation process established for initiatives undertaken pursuant to this Protocol. [Our emphasis]

As for the Government of Canada, subclause 9.4 provides that it “**may** consult with interested associations and groups about the programs provided for in this Protocol and toward which it provides a financial contribution. **When deemed necessary**, consultations with national organizations will be conducted jointly with CMEC and the provinces and territories.” [Our emphasis]

These provisions explain why a number of witnesses reported that they are unable to determine which areas, projects or initiatives receive federal funding.

2.2.3. Additional funding or core funding?

The preamble to the Protocol sets out the justifications for the federal government’s investments in education. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963–1969) recognized that minority language education and second-language instruction results in additional costs for provincial and territorial governments. Consequently, the federal government, using its spending power, is committed to taking on the so-called additional costs of these education programs to ensure education of equal quality to that received by the majority is provided to the minority.

However, a number of witnesses asserted that the Protocol seems to have had a perverse effect and enabled some provinces and territories to back out of their constitutional obligations to OLMCs in the area of education, including early childhood education.

The Conseil des écoles fransaskoises condemned the “big gap between the early childhood programs offered to the majority and those offered to the minority.”⁸⁴ It seems that the Government of Saskatchewan funds “prekindergarten programs for

84 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0905 (Hélène Grimard, Vice-Chair, Conseil des écoles fransaskoises).

English-language school boards.”⁸⁵ Yet this same government “does not provide targeted funding for the CEF’s prekindergarten programs.”⁸⁶ Moreover, not one of the recently created 889 child-care spaces was allocated to Saskatchewan’s francophone community.⁸⁷

In Manitoba, the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine “uses its operational budget to fund the pre-kindergarten programs it offers in its five schools, as well as the spaces it leases from organizations.”⁸⁸

According to the Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord in Alberta, “there is no guaranteed funding to ensure the stability and the harmonization of service delivery models for early childhood.”⁸⁹ Nathalie Lachance, President of the Conseil Scolaire Centre-Nord, said that most of the services available are provided by the community itself:

In our province, the existence of a lot of French-language early childhood services is a near miracle. These services are the result of the commitment and goodwill of volunteer parents, the sponsorship of projects by associations that often have insufficient resources, and support from schools.⁹⁰

In some cases, the federal government contributes to an initiative, but the province does not provide the necessary core funding. As Dolorèse Nolette, Assistant Dean and Director of the Centre collégial de l’Alberta at Campus Saint-Jean, explained, for now “only the roadmap funding will enable us to set up new programs. Campus Saint-Jean receives part of the envelope set aside for post-secondary education. The Centre collégial will take money from that envelope for the early childhood education program.”⁹¹

85 Conseil des écoles fransaskoises, *Please help! The Fransaskois community is at the mercy of the assimilationist policies of the government of Saskatchewan and Parliament is missing in action*, submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages for its study on access to early childhood services in the minority language, 2 March 2018, p. 4.

86 Ibid., p. 5.

87 Ibid., p. 7.

88 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0910 (Alain Laberge, Director General, Division scolaire franco-manitobaine).

89 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 1 March 2018, 0920 (Nathalie Lachance, President, Conseil Scolaire Centre-Nord).

90 Ibid.

91 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 1 March 2018, 1000 (Dolorèse Nolette, Assistant Dean and Director, Centre collégial de l’Alberta, Campus Saint-Jean, As an Individual).



This is also the case at Educacentre College in British Columbia: “The funding we receive for college training comes exclusively from bilateral education agreements. The province contributes nothing.”⁹²

Some witnesses also noted that provincial programs are not tailored to the needs of francophone communities. For example, funding may not be allocated appropriately. Marie-Andrée Asselin explained that British Columbia’s funding programs do not include specific components for francophone communities:

We are talking about amending the structure, that is to say including permanent legislative measures so that the province does not forget about us. For instance, in 2014 the province offered a lot of funding to open new day care spaces, but up till now, only two projects involved francophones. Why? Because there is no provision to provide funds directly to francophones. We always have to proceed via calls for tender. Then we are on the same footing as anglophones, and our respective projects compete. If our francophone community needs a day care for infants, for instance, and the province gives priority to day cares for children from 3 to 4 years of age in a more anglophone region, our project will be denied because it does not fit into the province's action plan.⁹³

Federal investments need to increase funding for or even enhance minority language education programs, including early childhood education programs. The Division scolaire franco-manitobaine explained that francophone communities’ fair share of funding “is the amount that provides for substantive equality.”⁹⁴ The Government of Canada describes the principle of substantive equality as follows:

Substantive equality is achieved when one takes into account, where necessary, the differences in characteristics and circumstances of minority communities and provides services with distinct content or using a different method of delivery to ensure that the minority receives services of the same quality as the majority. **This approach is the norm in Canadian law.**⁹⁵

The current lack or instability of funding for French-language early childhood education in some provinces is contrary to the principle of substantive equality. It is also a flagrant

92 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0910 (Yvon Laberge, President, Educacentre College).

93 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0935 (Marie-Andrée Asselin, Managing Director, Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique).

94 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0945 (Alain Laberge, Director General, Division scolaire franco-manitobaine).

95 Government of Canada, Public service and military, Values and ethics of the public service, Official languages in the public service, Official languages in communications and services to the public, Analytical Grid (Substantive Equality).

breach of the duty to right past wrongs that section 23 of the Charter imposes on the provinces and territories.

Alain Laberge explained the impact of the underfunding of French educational institutions on the vitality of the Franco-Manitoban community as follows:

The federal government gives us money to build daycare centres in our schools or to build spaces. The number of students is rising steadily, but the province gives us minimal infrastructure, that is, a very small school. In most cases, in all the provinces where French-language schools have been built, they were overcrowded even before they opened. What goes by the wayside? It is the daycare centre. There is growth in daycare centres, but we cannot give them any more space in our schools. Where do those children go then? They end up in English-language daycare centres, in anglophone communities, and then make anglophone friends at English-language schools.⁹⁶

According to the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, the federal government must play a larger role in order to achieve substantive equality in early childhood education:

Currently, the federal government *may* use its spending power as a vehicle for change to close the gap between the majority and the minority, particularly in the area of early learning. The federal government should be *required* to use its spending power in that way.⁹⁷

3. The federal government as a champion of francophone communities?

Francophone communities, particularly those in Western Canada, see the federal government as their advocate.

This is certainly true of francophones living in Saskatchewan. H  l  ne Grimard, Vice-Chair of the Conseil des   coles fransaskoises (C  F), explained that the "Franco-Saskatchewanian community is facing one of the highest rates of assimilation in the country."⁹⁸ She also said that consideration of "the interests of our communities during the implementation of these instruments depends on a lenient political will of our government towards us, which, let's be frank, is rather rare."⁹⁹ Accordingly, the C  F argues that "intervention by the federal government is critical. It must ensure the

96 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0945 (Alain Laberge, Director General, Division scolaire franco-manitobaine).

97 Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, *Concrete proposals to better protect early childhood programming in Manitoba and throughout Canada*, Winnipeg 2 March 2018, p. 2.

98 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0905 (H  l  ne Grimard, Vice-Chair, Conseil des   coles fransaskoises).

99 Ibid.



promotion of French-language communities in Saskatchewan, and at least partially bridge the gap between our communities and the English-speaking majority in Saskatchewan."¹⁰⁰

Albert Nolette, Vice-President of the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta, described his vision for the federal government's role as follows:

In a minority setting, you will agree that official language communities cannot rely only on the government to develop programs and services tailored to the linguistic and cultural realities in its area. Mostly, they have to create them themselves. However, many services provided directly to the public, early childhood services being a good example, are provided at provincial level by governments that do not always have any obligations to the minority, as is the case in Alberta. Our communities, therefore, are not always consulted or considered when programs are being developed. So the programs designed to meet the needs of the population in general are not always the most appropriate, the most effective, or the most efficient for our communities.

...

In that sense, it is imperative for the federal government to play a key role in funding and for it to finally define a mechanism that allows the language clauses to be reflected in federal-provincial transfers. It must make sure that funding allocated to minority language communities is invested in services that our communities design specifically for themselves. Those services have to adequately meet our needs, to follow a logical path that increases the capacity of the community and to actually be accessible to those who speak French.¹⁰¹

In British Columbia, the provincial government has made early childhood services a priority. Yet the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique reported that neither the budget nor the Throne Speech mentioned the francophone community in the context of early childhood education.¹⁰² Furthermore, British Columbia is the only province that has still not reached an agreement with the francophone community on French-language services.¹⁰³ These are some of the reasons why Mr. Ouellette, Vice-Chair of the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, told the

100 Ibid.

101 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 1 March 2018, 0915 (Albert Nolette, Vice-President, Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta).

102 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0910 (Marc-André Ouellette, Vice-Chair, Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique).

103 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0910 (Marie-France Lapierre, Chair, Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique).

Committee that, if the federal government “were not here, in British Columbia, we would not be here either.”¹⁰⁴

4. Defend provincial prerogatives or the constitutional rights of the francophone minority?

The Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (CSFCB) provided the Committee with a letter that it sent to the Department of Canadian Heritage describing its problems with the provincial government regarding the Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction. The letter also outlines the federal government’s responsibility to protect and advance the education rights of official language minorities.

In response to the CSFCB’s concerns, a Canadian Heritage official reportedly stated in a conference call (on 15 November 2017) that the department had the authority to block British Columbia’s decisions.¹⁰⁵ However, the official also said that it does not have the power to convince the province to adopt a certain approach or a particular practice regarding transfers of federal funding for minority language education.¹⁰⁶

The CSFCB replied that it did not agree with this narrow interpretation of the Department of Canadian Heritage’s powers for the following reasons:¹⁰⁷

By negotiating the 2013 Protocol, the Department of Canadian Heritage thought it was showing that it was exercising its federal education spending power under subsection 43(1) of the *Official Languages Act* in order to “advance the equality of status and use of English and French in Canadian society.” When the Department of Canadian Heritage uses its spending power and other powers in this way, including those to make agreements and award funds in the area of education, it must take into account the obligations set out in section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Properly interpreted, these powers go well beyond the mere authority to block provincial and territorial decisions.

In addition, section 45 of the *Official Languages Act* enables the Department of Canadian Heritage to consult and negotiate agreements with the provincial

104 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0940 (Marc-André Ouellette, Vice-Chair, Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique).

105 Letter from the trustees of the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique to the Department of Canadian Heritage, Subject: Follow-up on the teleconference of Wednesday, 15 November 2017, between the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique and Department of Canadian Heritage officials (Official Languages Branch), 23 February 2018, p. 4. [Available in French only]

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid.



governments “to ensure, to the greatest practical extent but subject to Part IV, that the provision of federal, provincial, municipal and education services in both official languages is coordinated and that regard is had to the needs of the recipients of those services.” The CSFCB is one of the recipients of the funding provided by the 2013 Protocol. Its needs, which it is communicating to you, should therefore be considered.¹⁰⁸ [Translation]

5. The existing foundation

The provinces and territories are required to implement section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in the area of education. Section 23 does not explicitly refer to early childhood education, but, as Saskatchewan’s francophone community pointed out, when the Charter was enacted, prekindergarten programs for four-year-olds and kindergarten programs for five-year-olds were not even a consideration.¹⁰⁹ Today, these programs are part of the primary school mandate and integrated into programming in several provincial jurisdictions, which together are home to over 50% of francophones living in minority communities.¹¹⁰ In 2008, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), published “a joint ministerial statement that underscores provincial and territorial responsibility for four pillars of lifelong learning,” including early childhood learning and development.¹¹¹ In addition, the CMEC developed the *Early Learning and Development Framework*. This framework builds on provincial and territorial objectives and a pan-Canadian approach. It “provides guiding principles for education policy and curriculum to support the development of quality early learning programs.”¹¹²

The provinces and territories are not subject to the *Official Languages Act*, but be that as it may, the federal government still has obligations to official language communities, even under the bilateral agreements.

Furthermore, the bilateral agreements made under the Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education and Second-Language Instruction and the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework are subject to the *Policy on Transfer Payments*.

108 Ibid.

109 Conseil des écoles fransaskoises et al., *Accès aux services à la petite enfance dans la langue de la minorité*, submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages as part of its study on access to early childhood services in French, Winnipeg, 2 March 2018, p. 19. [Available in French only]

110 Ibid.

111 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada [CMEC], *CMEC Early Childhood Learning and Development Working Group, CMEC Early Learning and Development Framework*, 2014, p. 3.

112 Ibid., p. 4.

Paragraph 6.5.14 of this policy provides that deputy heads of federal institutions are responsible for the following:

Ensuring, when transfer payment programs support activities that benefit members of both official language communities, that their design and delivery respect the obligations of the Government of Canada as set out in Part VII of the *Official Languages Act* and that services and benefits are made available in both official languages in compliance with the *Official Languages Act*.¹¹³

The Directive on Transfer Payments made under the *Policy on Transfer Payments* stipulates the following:

In cases where the terms and conditions have identified that the transfer payment program may have an impact on members of either official language community:

- a provision, where appropriate, outlining the manner in which the recipient's activities will support the Government of Canada's obligation to enhance the vitality of the official language minorities in Canada and support and assist their development and foster the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society; and
- a description, where appropriate, of how the services or benefits will be made available in both official languages in accordance with the *Official Languages Act*.¹¹⁴

It is reasonable to believe that Canadian Heritage has a sufficiently solid basis on which to exercise more leadership in education, including early childhood education. The question is to what extent provincial education prerogatives can take precedence over francophones' constitutional rights.

It is important to note that, in July 2017, Canadian Heritage reached a strategic agreement with the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne and the Commission nationale des parents francophones. The agreement has the virtue of stating that minority school boards play a key role in fully implementing section 23 of the Charter.¹¹⁵

113 Government of Canada, *Policy on Transfer Payments*.

114 Government of Canada, Directive on Transfer Payments, Appendix F, section 16, and Appendix G, section 37.

115 Canadian Heritage, *Entente stratégique entre le gouvernement du Canada, la Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones, la Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada et la Commission nationale des parents francophones en matière d'éducation*, 19 July 2017, p. 1. [Available in French only]



Later in the agreement, Canadian Heritage commits on the federal government's behalf to taking certain positions during the negotiations with the CMEC for the next Protocol. The department will take into account the priorities of francophone minority communities and advocate for certain provisions that – if adopted and implemented – would address many of the gaps and problems noted in this report.¹¹⁶

In fact, the agreement could result in the next Protocol requiring the provinces, territories and federal government to consult with francophone minority school boards, improve accountability mechanisms, ensure the Protocol recognizes the role minority school boards play in all linguistic and cultural aspects of primary and secondary education, and make it clear that federal funding must be used to enable provincial and territorial governments and francophone minority school boards to move beyond business as usual.¹¹⁷

Moreover, the agreement proposes that a specific protocol for minority-language education, separate from second-language instruction, be developed. However, if the two objectives remain in a single protocol, Canadian Heritage promises to consult francophone school boards before allowing a province or territory to transfer funding intended for minority-language education to second-language instruction.

As regards early childhood education, Canadian Heritage commits to recommending that the Protocol be clarified to ensure it covers the preschool, primary, secondary and post-secondary (college and university) education levels. However, as noted above, the agreement stipulates that Canadian Heritage will seek to have the next Protocol recognize the role minority school boards play in all linguistic and cultural aspects of primary and secondary education. The Committee hopes that the omission of early childhood education from the provision on the role of school boards will not affect the ability of francophone school boards to make decisions on early childhood education in the next Protocol.

6. Seeking a legislative foundation

A number of witnesses believe that the lack of legislative measures is hindering the development of French-language early childhood education, particularly in the Western

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid., p. 2.

provinces. The CSFCB explained the issue as follows: "Funding is absolutely necessary, but it is not enough to protect our community's rights."¹¹⁸

The witnesses called for amendments to the *Official Languages Act* so that it establishes and specifies an increased role for the federal government in early childhood education in minority communities. Alpha Barry of the Conseil des écoles fransaskoises offered the following explanation for this request:

What we need is a federal act that includes protection and guarantees respect for legislation, the philosophy and the ultimate purpose of section 23 of the charter. Right now, we are at the mercy of politicians.

...

Clauses and rules are really not what we need. We need protection that is included in an act in order to recognize the need to consult and to provide accountability. If you send us money, you have to live up to your obligations to us.¹¹⁹

The Division scolaire franco-manitobaine offered the following view: "The solution is simple: Parliament must limit the discretion of federal institutions to allow the Province of Manitoba to do what it likes with the federal funds."¹²⁰

Saskatchewan's francophone community said that such a measure would put an end to the legal battles that school boards have been forced to engage in:

Clarifying the issue of early childhood programs in the Charter and the *Official Languages Act* would facilitate and prevent interminable legal interpretation proceedings, which drain French-language school boards of their already limited human and financial resources.¹²¹ [Translation]

The Conseil scolaire des écoles fransaskoises provided the Committee with a brief in which it proposed wording for a new part to the *Official Languages Act* respecting

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- 118 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 28 February 2018, 0835 (Marie-France Lapierre, Chair, Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique).
- 119 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0940 (Alpha Barry, Chair, Conseil des écoles fransaskoises).
- 120 LANG, *Evidence*, 1st Session, 42nd Parliament, 2 March 2018, 0910 (Alain Laberge, Director General, Division scolaire franco-manitobaine).
- 121 Conseil des écoles fransaskoises et al., *Accès aux services à la petite enfance dans la langue de la minorité*, submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages as part of its study on access to early childhood services in French, Winnipeg, 2 March 2018, p. 19. [Available in French only]



minority language education (see Appendix A). The Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique supports the substance of that proposal.¹²²

7. Recommendations

It is clear that francophone communities in Western Canada face major challenges in gaining access to early childhood services. Money is at the heart of the issue.

The Committee is delighted that the *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future* provides for \$20 million over five years in new funding for early childhood development. According to Employment and Social Development Canada, this funding will be transferred directly to OLMC organizations, primarily “to support professional learning opportunities and training for early childhood educators”¹²³ and “to support entrepreneurs in opening more francophone daycares and child care services.”¹²⁴ The Action Plan also provides \$10 million over five years in new funding to enhance early childhood health promotion programming. This funding will be administered by the Public Health Agency of Canada.¹²⁵

But to meet the existing and growing demand for French child-care services, francophone communities need enough financial resources to take the following actions:

- build new child-care facilities;
- expand or renovate existing facilities;
- create new child-care spaces;
- adapt facilities and provide French-language specialized services to children aged 0 to 5 years;

122 Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, *Providing a framework for federal initiatives in early childhood education in the Official Languages Act*, submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages for its study on access to early childhood services in French, Wednesday, 28 February 2018, p. 16.

123 Government of Canada, *Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future*, Ottawa, 2018, p. 23.

124 Ibid.

125 Ibid., p. 52.

- support French post-secondary institutions so that they can train more qualified educators able to work in French, and launch new research initiatives;
- improve the occupational status of early childhood educators and consequently improve the recruitment and retention of qualified professionals; and
- support community organizations so that they can develop and implement initiatives to help parents and families who choose to educate their children in French, starting in early childhood.

The Committee would like to make recommendations respecting communities' priorities for French-language early childhood education. However, it is up to provincial and territorial governments, and to some extent the federal government, to consult with communities in order to improve their programs and ensure they address the needs and priorities of OLMCs. Accordingly, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 1

That the Treasury Board Secretariat create a new policy instrument to require that all bilateral agreements, no matter the subject matter, include the following:

- a) initiatives and programs specific to official language minority communities (OLMCs) that deliver services equal in quality to those received by the majority;
- b) binding provisions that require the provinces and territories to hold official consultations with OLMCs;
- c) targets and performance measures tailored to OLMCs; and
- d) explicit accountability provisions that require the provinces and territories to disclose exactly how much funding is owed to OLMCs under the bilateral agreements.

Recommendation 2

That the Treasury Board Secretariat remind federal institutions about the *Policy on Transfer Payments* and, more specifically, paragraph 6.5.14 on an annual basis. This paragraph provides that deputy heads of federal institutions are responsible for the following:



Ensuring, when transfer payment programs support activities that benefit members of both official language communities, that their design and delivery respect the obligations of the Government of Canada as set out in Part VII of the Official Languages Act and that services and benefits are made available in both official languages in compliance with the *Official Languages Act*.¹²⁶

Recommendation 3

That the Treasury Board Secretariat require federal institutions to implement the principle of substantive equality and that it develop implementation and annual assessment tools for that principle. The Government of Canada describes substantive equality as follows:

Substantive equality is achieved when one takes into account, where necessary, the differences in characteristics and circumstances of minority communities and provides services with distinct content or using a different method of delivery to ensure that the minority receives services of the same quality as the majority. This approach is the norm in Canadian law.¹²⁷

Recommendation 4

That, after the current *Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework* expires, in negotiating future agreements, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, with his provincial and territorial counterparts, take the steps necessary to make official language minority communities a mandatory investment area.

Recommendation 5

That Canadian Heritage clearly define the concept of “additional costs” relative to core funding in the next Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Education.

126 Government of Canada, *Policy on Transfer Payments*.

127 Government of Canada, Public service and military, Values and ethics of the public service, Official languages in the public service, Official languages in communications and services to the public, Analytical Grid (Substantive Equality).

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada amend the *Official Languages Act* to establish and specify an increased role for the federal government in the area of minority language education, including early childhood education.

The Committee believes that parliamentary intervention is sometimes more effective at resolving issues such as the one considered in this report. Therefore, the Committee would like to meet with the provincial and territorial ministers responsible for francophone communities (see Appendix B) at their convenience for an open, frank and collaborative discussion of the issues that matter to the francophone communities of their province or territory, including early childhood education.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Committee would like to extend its sincere thanks to all the witnesses who took part in this study and who have been working tirelessly for many years so that young children can exercise their right to a French-language education at an early age in Western Canada and across the country.



APPENDIX A

Conseil des écoles fransaskoises, Proposed amendments to the *Official Languages Act*, excerpt from the brief *Please help! The Fransaskois community is at the mercy of the assimilationist policies of the government of Saskatchewan and Parliament is missing in action*, submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages for its study on access to early childhood services in the minority language, 2 March 2018, pp. 10–11.

1. Section 42 of the Official Languages Act is replaced by the following:

“42. The Minister [of the department to be determined], in consultation with other ministers of the Crown, shall encourage and promote a coordinated approach to the implementation by federal institutions of the commitments set out in section 41, in particular by adopting a five-year action plan on official languages for Canada.”

[...]

2. The same Act is amended by the insertion after section 43 of the following:

“43.1(1) The Minister [of the department to be determined] is committed to promoting and supporting education in the official language of the minority.

(2) The Minister shall take such measures as that Minister considers appropriate to implement that commitment and, in particular, the following measures:

a) consult with the provincial and territorial governments and with the minority official language school boards and commissions, and negotiate with them the adoption of a five-year agreement on minority-language education;

b) consult with the provincial and territorial governments and with the minority official language school boards and commissions, and negotiate with them the adoption of a five-year agreement on capital requirements in the area of minority official language education;

1. L'article 42 de la Loi sur les langues officielles est remplacé par ce qui suit :

« 42. Le ministre [du ministère à déterminer], en consultation avec les autres ministres fédéraux, suscite et encourage la coordination de la mise en œuvre par les institutions fédérales de cet engagement, notamment en adoptant un plan d'action quinquennal en matière de langues officielles pour le Canada. »

[...]

2. La même loi est modifiée par insertion, après l'article 43, de ce qui suit :

« 43.1 (1) Le ministre [du ministère à déterminer] s'engage à favoriser et à appuyer l'éducation dans la langue officielle de la minorité.

(2) Le ministre prend les mesures qu'il estime indiquées pour mettre en œuvre cet engagement, notamment les mesures suivantes :

a) il consulte les gouvernements provinciaux et territoriaux ainsi que les conseils et les commissions scolaires de langue officielle en situation minoritaire, et négocie avec eux l'adoption d'un accord quinquennal relatif à l'enseignement dans la langue de la minorité;

b) il consulte les gouvernements provinciaux et territoriaux ainsi que les conseils et les commissions scolaires de langue officielle en situation minoritaire, et négocie avec eux l'adoption d'un accord quinquennal relatif aux besoins en immobilisations dans le domaine de l'éducation dans la langue officielle de

c) consult with the provincial and territorial governments and with the minority official language school boards and commissions, and negotiate with them the adoption of a five-year agreement on early childhood learning and child care in the minority official language;

d) encourage the provinces and territories to adopt measures that promote progress toward the equality of status and use of English and French;

e) ensure that the funds transferred to the provinces and territories are actually spent as provided for in the agreements negotiated.

(3) In negotiating the agreements referred to in paragraphs (2) a), b) and c), the Minister shall take into account the needs of the recipients and rely on the principles set out in section 43.2.

43.2 The Minister [of the department to be determined] shall apply the following principles in implementing this Part:

a) the fundamental importance of education for the vitality and development of Canada's official language minorities;

b) the importance of the role of minority school boards and commissions in this regard;

c) the principle of subsidiarity;

d) the importance of accountability and transparency;

e) the importance of effective consultation.

43.3 The Minister of Finance shall allocate the necessary funds to implement this Part."

la minorité;

c) il consulte les gouvernements provinciaux et territoriaux ainsi que les représentants intéressés des communautés de langue officielle en situation minoritaire, et négocie avec eux l'adoption d'un accord quinquennal relatif à l'apprentissage et à la garde des jeunes enfants dans la langue officielle de la minorité;

d) il encourage les provinces et les territoires à adopter des mesures qui favorisent la progression vers l'égalité de statut ou d'usage du français et de l'anglais;

e) il s'assure que les fonds transférés aux provinces et aux territoires sont effectivement dépensés comme prévu dans les accords négociés.

(3) En négociant les accords prévus aux alinéas (2) a), b) et c), le ministre tient compte des besoins des usagers et s'appuie sur les principes énumérés à l'article 43.2.

43.2 Le ministre [du ministère à déterminer] met en œuvre la présente partie en appliquant les principes suivants :

a) l'importance fondamentale de l'éducation pour l'épanouissement et le développement des minorités de langue officielle du Canada;

b) l'importance du rôle des conseils et commissions scolaires minoritaires à cet égard;

c) le principe de subsidiarité;

d) l'importance de l'imputabilité, de la reddition de compte et de la transparence;

e) l'importance de la consultation effective.

43.3 Le ministre des Finances consacre les fonds nécessaires pour mettre en œuvre la présente partie. »

APPENDIX B: THE PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CANADIAN FRANCOPHONIE

Alberta: The Honourable Ricardo Miranda, Minister of Culture and Tourism and Minister responsible for the Francophone Secretariat

British Columbia: The Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health and Minister Responsible for the Francophone Affairs Program

Manitoba: The Honourable Rochelle Squires, Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs

New Brunswick: The Honourable Francine Landry, Minister of Economic Development, Minister responsible for La Francophonie and Minister responsible for Opportunities New Brunswick

Newfoundland and Labrador: The Honourable Christopher Mitchelmore, Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation and Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs

Nova Scotia: The Honourable Lena Metlege Diab, Minister of Immigration and Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie

Northwest Territories: The Honourable Caroline Cochrane, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment and Minister responsible for the Status of Women

Nunavut: The Honourable David Joanasie, Minister of Education, Minister of Culture and Heritage, Minister responsible for Nunavut Arctic College and Minister of Languages

Ontario: The Honourable Marie-France Lalonde, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and Minister of Francophone Affairs

Prince Edward Island: The Honourable H. Wade MacLauchlan, Premier of Prince Edward Island, President of the Executive Council, Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister Responsible for Acadian and Francophone Affairs

Quebec: The Honourable Jean-Marc Fournier, Minister responsible for Canadian Relations and the Canadian Francophonie and Government House Leader

Saskatchewan: The Honourable Nadine Wilson, Provincial Secretary

Yukon: The Honourable John Streicker, Minister of Community Services, Minister responsible for French Language Services Directorate and Minister responsible for Yukon Liquor Corporation, Yukon Cannabis Corporation and Yukon Lottery Commission

APPENDIX C

LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development	2017/11/30	83
Department of Employment and Social Development		
Doug Murphy, Special Advisor to the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister Strategic and Service Policy Branch		
Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique	2018/02/28	91
Marie-France Lapierre, Chair		
Marc-André Ouellette, Vice-Chair		
Educacentre College		
Yvon Laberge, President		
Isabelle Thibault, Director of Studies		
Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique		
Marie-Pierre Lavoie, President		
Marie-Andrée Asselin, Managing Director		
Réseau-Femmes Colombie-Britannique		
Maryse Beaujeau Weppenaar, Executive Director		
Tartine et Chocolat Daycare and Preschool		
Jocelyne Ky, Director		
As an individual	2018/03/01	92
Dolorèse Nolette, Assistant Dean and Director Centre collégial de l'Alberta, Campus Saint-Jean		
Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta		
Albert Nolette, Vice-President		
Conseil Scolaire Centre-Nord		
Nathalie Lachance, President		

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Edmonton Public School Board Marie Commance-Shulko, French Immersion Consultant	2018/03/01	92
Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta Gillian Anderson, President		
Institut Guy-Lacombe de la famille Cynthia Huard, President		
Société de la petite enfance et de la famille du sud de l'Alberta Sarah Lessard, Executive Director		
As individuals Dominique Arbez, Professor and Coordinator Early Childhood Education, Université de Saint-Boniface Mélanie Cwikla, Director Technical and Professional Programs, Université Saint-Boniface	2018/03/02	93
Association des parents fransaskois Carol-Guillaume Gagné, Chief Executive Officer Peter Ormiston, Vice-President		
Coalition francophone de la petite enfance du Manitoba Joanne Colliou, Manager Centre de la petite enfance et de la famille		
Conseil des écoles fransaskoises Alpha Barry, Chair Hélène Grimard, Vice-Chair		
Division scolaire franco-manitobaine Alain Laberge, Director General		
Fédération des parents du Manitoba Brigitte L'Heureux, Managing Director		
Les Chouettes de Lorette Inc. Juliette Chabot, Director		

APPENDIX D LIST OF BRIEFS

Organizations and Individuals

Arbez, Dominique

Association des parents fransaskois

Coalition francophone de la petite enfance du Manitoba

Conseil des écoles fransaskoises

Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique

Division scolaire franco-manitobaine

Fédération des parents du Manitoba

Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique

Réseau-Femmes Colombie-Britannique

Tartine et Chocolat Daycare and Preschool

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* (Meetings Nos. 83, 91 to 93, and 98 to 101) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Denis Paradis
Chair

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

"Access to Early Childhood Services"

Introduction

The New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP) would like to thank all who appeared before or submitted written briefs to the Standing Committee on Official Languages in connection with the Committee's visit to Vancouver, British Columbia; Edmonton, Alberta; and Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The NDP supports most of the recommendations in the Committee's report, although we wish to present a few points with respect to access to early childhood services. As supported by the members of the Committee, this is out of a desire to put measures in place that help improve access to early childhood services for linguistic minorities with a minority-language education continuum in mind.

As well, the Office of the Commissioner has shown that the federal government's efforts surrounding access to early childhood services in the minority language are not enough and that government must absolutely do more to combat assimilation.

The NDP wishes to support working mothers and fathers and make life more affordable, unlike the Liberal government, which did not make this a priority in the 2018 budget. We wish to see the creation of an affordable universal child-care system that considers the needs of linguistic minorities.

I- Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages

The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development to report by March 31, 2018, on the measures taken to implement the recommendations addressed to each of them. We are therefore waiting for the Office of the Commissioner's comments on the government's response and specific follow-up. For now, the government has shown that early childhood services are in fact not a priority, since we are now in the second-to-last year of this government and nothing substantial has been done.

II- 2018 Budget

The 2018 budget tabled by the Liberal government acknowledges that the lack of child-care spaces is a major problem for most Canadian families. However, no solutions have been proposed to address the situation.

The current system barely covers one in four children, and daycare services in Canada are some of the most expensive in the world. According to Marie-Pierre Lavoie, President of the Fédération des parents francophones de Colombie-Britannique, "British Columbia would need at least 2,600 additional daycare spaces – in other words, 650 multiplied by four – if we assume that children spend the first year of their lives at home with a parent."

Furthermore, the Liberal government has made no substantial investment in daycare services. In fact, Canada has invested only a tiny fraction of what Canadians need to end the shortage of daycare spaces. Waiting lists are very long as a result of the severe shortage of spaces in French-language child-care centres. In Manitoba, "about 800 children are on waiting lists for a place in French-language educational child care," according to Brigitte L'Heureux, Managing Director, Fédération des parents du Manitoba. In Saskatchewan, 258 children aged 0 to 4 were on a waiting list for child care in 2015–2016. In their brief, the Conseil des écoles fransaskoises and its associates noted that 49.5% of francophone children in Saskatchewan whose parents want child care in French do not have access to a child-care centre. The government plans to invest only \$20 million over 5 years in daycare services, and that is only in training early childhood educators and to help entrepreneurs open daycare centres. This is clearly not enough given the considerable needs. As stated by the Committee on Official Languages, "[m]oney is at the heart of the issue. To meet the existing and growing demand for French child-care services, francophone communities need enough financial resources."

Conclusion

The NDP wishes to see the creation of an affordable universal child-care system that considers the needs of linguistic minorities. The NDP therefore calls on the Liberal government to pledge to reduce the cost of child-care spaces, open up new spaces for linguistic minorities, and provide universal access to early childhood services to address the specific needs of linguistic minorities.